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Letter dated 4 October 2004 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I wish to refer to my letter of 26 November 2001 (S/2001/1128) informing the Security Council of my intention to establish a United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) for three years from January 2002, subject to a review to be conducted after its first year of operation. In your letter dated 29 November 2001 (S/2001/1129), you informed me that the members of the Council had welcomed my intention to establish that Office and had taken note of the functions assigned to it. Subsequently, the Office, headed by my Special Representative, Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, was formally opened in September 2002 in Dakar, where my Special Representative has thus far enjoyed the cooperation of the host Government in carrying out the mandate of the Office.

Owing to administrative and logistical difficulties, the Office became operational only from January 2003. I am attaching a review of the activities and performance of UNOWA covering the period from January 2003 to July 2004. This review provides a fair assessment of progress made in implementing the main functions assigned to the Office as spelled out in its original mandate, as well as additional tasks that the Security Council requested it to carry out. The review also reflects the positive perception by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and other key international partners, including the various United Nations entities with regional offices in West Africa, of the work of UNOWA.

Despite limited resources, UNOWA has proved to be a useful instrument for raising public awareness about cross-border and subregional problems, bringing a regional perspective to a number of issues usually seen from an exclusively national perspective, and promoting conflict prevention. UNOWA was also able to develop useful mechanisms and to promote plans of action for enhancing linkages with other United Nations entities and important national and international partners, including ECOWAS, the European Union, the Mano River Union and civil society organizations; to support peacemaking efforts in the subregion, especially in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia; and to undertake in-depth studies on complex issues affecting the subregion, as well as field missions aimed at assessing developments in tension-prone areas.

Although not specifically provided for in the mandate of the Office, the review further touches on the additional task that I have entrusted to my Special Representative in his capacity as Chairman of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission, which is charged with following up on the implementation of the

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decision of the International Court of Justice of October 2002 on land and maritime boundaries between the two countries.

Promoting an integrated regional approach to the wide-ranging and complex challenges facing West Africa remains a long-term process requiring sustained interaction between UNOWA and its key partners in the subregion. To that end, the Office should pursue its activities, including follow-up to far-reaching initiatives taken by the international community. These include, in particular, the recommendations contained in the report of the Security Council mission to West Africa of June 2004 (S/2004/525) and the Council's recommendations on cross-border issues in West Africa (S/PRST/2004/7 of 25 March 2004), adopted at the conclusion of its open debate on my report on ways to combat cross-border and subregional problems in West Africa (S/2004/200).

In the light of the foregoing, I recommend that the mandate of UNOWA be extended for a further period of three years, from 1 January 2005 to 31 December 2007, subject to a mid-term review in July 2006. Should the Security Council concur with my recommendation, I intend to strengthen UNOWA, as called for in the report of the Security Council mission to West Africa of June 2004, in order to enable the Office to perform its mandate more effectively.

I should be grateful if you would bring this letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Kofi A. **Annan**

Annex

Review of the activities and performance of the United Nations Office for West Africa

January 2003-July 2004

I. Introduction

1. The United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) had its genesis in the mission led by the Department of Political Affairs to 11 countries of the subregion in March 2001. In its report (S/2001/434), which was submitted to the Security Council on 2 May 2001, that mission recommended the establishment of an office to enhance United Nations capacity and collaboration in the subregion and to complement existing activities.

2. The Secretary-General, in a letter dated 26 November 2001 (S/2001/1128), informed the Security Council of his intention to establish a United Nations Office for West Africa to perform the following functions:

(a) Enhance linkages in the work of the United Nations and other partners in the subregion, by promoting an integrated sub-regional approach and facilitating coordination and information exchange, with due regard to specific mandates of United Nations organizations as well as peacekeeping operations and peace-building support offices;

(b) Liaising with and assisting, as appropriate, the Economic Community of West African States and the Mano River Union, in consultation with other subregional organizations and international partners;

(c) Carrying out good offices roles and special assignments in countries of the subregion, on behalf of the Secretary-General, including in the areas of conflict prevention and peace-building efforts;

(d) Reporting to Headquarters on key developments of subregional significance.

3. In the same letter, the Secretary-General indicated that the Office would be based in Dakar, be headed by an Under-Secretary-General and seven international staff, and that the duration of the Office would be for three years from January 2002, subject to a review of its work to be conducted after the first year of operation.

4. In a letter dated 29 November 2001 (S/2001/1129), the President of the Security Council informed the Secretary-General that the members of the Council had welcomed his intention to establish UNOWA and took note of the functions assigned to it. In July 2002, the Secretary-General appointed Mr. Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah as his Special Representative for West Africa and Head of UNOWA. Mr. Ould-Abdallah took up his assignment in Dakar in September 2002.

5. The present review of the activities and performance of the United Nations Office for West Africa covers the period from January 2003 (not January 2002) to July 2004 because, as explained below, the Office did not begin to operate in January 2002 and was far from being fully operational even in January 2003. The

review provides an assessment of progress made in the implementation of the main functions set out in the original mandate of the Office (see para. 2 above). While making a brief reference to the perception by key international partners of the work of UNOWA, the review also pertains to the performance of additional tasks assigned to the Office by the Security Council and the Secretary-General over the past two years. It further highlights the need to strengthen UNOWA to enable it to perform its mandate more effectively should the mandate be extended beyond December 2004.

II. Difficulties encountered in operationalizing the Office

6. The early days of operation of the United Nations Office for West Africa have been beset by administrative and logistical problems, most of which were highlighted in a report prepared by the Office of Internal Oversight Services in November 2003. As those problems stemmed mainly from inadequate support from Headquarters, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and his small group of staff spent an inordinate amount of time and energy on addressing management and administrative matters.

7. From September 2002 until August 2003, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General worked with the support of only two international staff (one Political Affairs Officer and one Administrative Officer) both of whom were on temporary assignment to UNOWA. The operations of the Office were therefore hampered by the delay in the deployment of the authorized substantive staff, who started arriving in August 2003. They included an Information Officer, a Political Affairs Officer and a Junior Professional Officer. UNOWA became fully operational from August 2003 to July 2004, following a significant improvement in support provided by Headquarters.

III. Review of the performance and activities of the Office

A. Enhancing linkages

1. Cooperation with United Nations peace operations in West Africa

8. The pressing need for United Nations peace operations and political offices to enhance their linkages and to pool resources in order to improve synergy, effectiveness, and cost savings has been a recurrent theme in almost all Security Council statements on the West African subregion. To this end, UNAMSIL took the initiative of hosting the first meeting of the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General in the region, in Freetown in November 2003, which was chaired by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa. A second meeting of Special Representatives was convened, this time by UNOWA, in Dakar in February 2004. The Security Council has encouraged the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa to convene such meetings, and in the report of its mission undertaken in June 2004 stated that it looked forward to hearing the outcome of the regular meetings of Special Representatives of the Secretary-General in the region. UNOWA plans to provide significant secretariat support and follow-up to ensure that these meetings are more effective and are held regularly, subject to the availability of the Special Representatives. At the same time, UNOWA recognizes that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations will

remain in the lead for all policy and operational matters that are predominantly of a peacekeeping nature.

2. Inter-agency cooperation

9. In order to enhance inter-agency cooperation in addressing cross-border issues affecting the activities of several agencies, UNOWA held two meetings in May and July 2003 in Dakar with the heads of United Nations system regional presences. Other meetings were held subsequently on average one every three months. Discussions centred on the regional political and security environment required for facilitating the work of the various United Nations entities. As called for by several regional United Nations offices, UNOWA intends to devote more time and resources in 2005 to convening additional inter-agency meetings on cross-border issues, subject to the extension of its mandate.

10. Another important aspect of the UNOWA mandate is to enhance the linkages between the development and political arms of the Organization in seeking ways to resolve the cross-border problems facing the West African subregion. For that purpose, UNDP agreed to assign to UNOWA a senior officer to serve as Director in the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and to also act as officer-in-charge in the absence of the Special Representative. While reinforcing the operational capacity of the Office, this provided an institutional link with development and other United Nations departments, agencies and funds. One of the key responsibilities of the Director, who took up office in April 2004, is to bring the development experience of UNDP in support of the work of UNOWA. Moreover, UNDP has recently recruited a Peace and Development Adviser who will be assigned to UNDP Senegal and UNOWA. Working with the Director, the Adviser will promote coherence between United Nations political objectives and UNDP development activities in West Africa. He will also support the integration of conflict prevention perspectives into UNDP policies, strategies and programmes in West Africa.

11. The co-location in UNOWA of the Head of the Regional Support Office of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, who also serves as Senior Humanitarian Adviser to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa, has significantly facilitated working relations and cooperation between UNOWA and the humanitarian agencies. It has also enabled UNOWA to integrate a humanitarian perspective into its activities. Moreover, the representative of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is systematically consulted and invited to participate in every stage of UNOWA political and other activities. This has been another positive area of collaboration among United Nations entities in the past year, and it is the intention of both UNOWA and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to continue to build on this achievement. Early in August 2004, for example, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General opened the workshop on the regional consolidated appeals process for West Africa, in order to underline the linkages between the United Nations political and humanitarian actors and responses in the region.

12. In addition, a Senior Human Rights Officer, who also reports to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights at Geneva, was recently appointed to serve with UNOWA.

13. In close consultation with its United Nations partners, UNOWA joined a newly created Inter-Agency Standing Committee based in Dakar and comprising the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNICEF, WFP and ICRC. The Committee is entrusted with the task of monitoring the humanitarian situation in West Africa and reporting on major developments to the headquarters of the concerned agencies.

3. Cooperation with the European Union and the diplomatic community

14. During the period under review, UNOWA has maintained close cooperation with the European Union (EU) and the diplomatic community accredited to Senegal. In the first half of 2004, the heads of mission of the European Union in Dakar indicated that they had received instructions to interact with UNOWA as an interlocutor for the entire region and to report on UNOWA activities throughout its mission area. The European Union recently proposed a formal cooperation agreement with UNOWA, which is in the process of being finalized. Many EU ambassadors based in Dakar are also accredited to Cape Verde, the Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau and Mali and thus have a wider perspective. For this reason, UNOWA has organized several meetings between the diplomatic community in Dakar and the Representative of the Secretary-General for Guinea-Bissau, when the latter travels to or through Dakar.

4. Outreach activities: civil society organizations and public information

15. Maintaining regular relations with prominent civil society organizations in West Africa has been a major priority for UNOWA since its establishment. It is the strong wish of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General that these links be strengthened and widened to include additional civil society organizations, especially the private sector. It is envisaged that UNOWA will make significant efforts to engage more systematically the leading corporate entities active in the region, not only in the context of the Secretary-General's Global Compact, but also to integrate the business perspective into the promotion of a regional approach and to seek private sector support for some of the projects implemented by UNOWA partners in the United Nations system.

16. Civil society organizations and international organizations including ICRC and IOM have been invited to some of the meetings of UNOWA with its United Nations partners, which provided a useful forum for increasing information-sharing and hearing alternative perspectives related to the promotion of peace, stability and development in the subregion. The primary partners of the Office in this regard have been the Mano River Women's Peace Network, the International Crisis Group, OXFAM, CODESRIA, RADDHO, the Gorée Institute, and the Open Society Initiative for West Africa. UNOWA staff have also established a practice of informing and consulting with representatives of civil society organizations during field missions.

17. Public information has been used as an important tool to promote the mandate and activities of the Office. A number of press releases have been issued, press conferences and interviews arranged, an UNOWA web site set up and maintained, and information dissemination sessions have been organized in Dakar and other West African capitals. Despite some headway, UNOWA has not yet made a major

impact on public awareness of the mandate and activities of the Office in the subregion. An expanded programme for media activities is, therefore, envisaged.

18. As part of its ongoing collaboration with United Nations peace missions, UNOWA assigned an information officer to work with UNOGBIS for the elections held in March 2004 in Guinea-Bissau, to assist in media relations.

5. Additional areas of inter-agency activity for which work is being planned

19. Following a visit to UNOWA by the Executive Director of UNFPA, in June 2004, UNOWA has arranged to work with UNFPA and other relevant United Nations entities, civil society and international partners on a study containing practical recommendations on the linkages between rapid urbanization, population growth, pressure on natural resources, and conflict in West Africa. This study is expected to be completed by February 2005, after which follow-up action would be required to publicize and implement the recommendations.

20. The Security Council mission to West Africa of June/July 2003, in its report (S/2003/688, para. 68), emphasized the importance of the issue of security sector reform, and indicated that the United Nations system, with appropriate assistance from Member States, should, with the experience now gained, be ready to provide essential elements for security sector reform in the subregion. Accordingly, UNOWA, in collaboration with ECOWAS and other United Nations and local partners in the subregion, has been devising operational guidelines and policy recommendations for an effective security sector reform in the subregion. Moreover, UNOWA and ECOWAS will organize a consultative conference with West African civil and military authorities and civil society on this issue early in October 2004.

21. The Security Council mission to West Africa of June 2004 indicated in its report that it would find it useful to have the Secretary-General's recommendations on what action the Security Council might take to help reduce the proliferation of small arms in the subregion (S/2004/525, para. 55). UNOWA plans to submit a report on this issue by the end of 2004. To this end, the Office will be working closely with ECOWAS, as well as with the Department of Disarmament Affairs in New York, the Lomé-based United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, and the various United Nations peace operations in the subregion.

6. Interaction with other international organizations

22. UNOWA has been invited to attend meetings of the International Contact Group on Liberia. The Office has also been working with the International Organization of la Francophonie and the Department of Political Affairs on the joint organization in Dakar of a conference on early warning and conflict prevention.

B. Liaising with and support to ECOWAS and the Mano River Union

23. Since the establishment of UNOWA, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General has maintained regular contact with senior representatives of ECOWAS, as well as with representatives of the States members of the Mano River Union.

24. Interaction with ECOWAS senior representatives, which greatly increased in recent months, is expected to be strengthened further. In May 2004 in Abuja, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General met with the 15 West African ambassadors accredited to the ECOWAS Secretariat in Nigeria to brief them on the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on ways to combat subregional and cross-border problems in West Africa (S/2004/200) and in the Security Council presidential statement on cross-border issues in West Africa (S/PRST/2004/7) that would require follow-up by ECOWAS member States. UNOWA intends to use the meeting with ECOWAS ambassadors as a forum for increasing collaboration with the Governments of the subregion.

25. The Security Council mission to West Africa of June/July 2003 recommended that, in order to improve cooperation with ECOWAS, UNOWA should assign an officer at ECOWAS headquarters. While noting that this arrangement would greatly benefit ECOWAS, at least on a regular part-time basis, UNOWA has not yet been able to put it in place because of its limited number of staff. The Council mission further recommended that UNOWA undertake a comprehensive study, in conjunction with ECOWAS and concerned Member States, of ways in which the international community could increase its cooperation with and assist in strengthening the capacity of ECOWAS. In response to that recommendation, which is consistent with the UNOWA mandate, a joint mission composed of the European Commission, UNDP and UNOWA visited Abuja in February 2004.

26. The findings of the joint mission, which were circulated in July 2004, will require a great deal of follow-up. The mission expects to soon receive feedback from ECOWAS on its findings. In the meantime, UNOWA had preliminary discussions with the European Commission in Abuja and UNDP in New York on joint support to ECOWAS with regard to some of the main recommendations of the mission, including the development of a regional conflict prevention strategy and the establishment of a policy planning capacity in the office of the ECOWAS Executive Secretary. UNOWA plans to convene a meeting with the European Commission/Abuja to explore further how cooperation with ECOWAS in the areas of conflict prevention and peace-building can be strengthened. The joint mission is a good example of the types of partnership initiatives that UNOWA will continue to carry out in the region in order to build on the experiences of other partners, minimize costs and avoid duplication.

27. In addition to developing a joint European Union-United Nations partnership with ECOWAS, UNOWA has also recently developed a long-term comprehensive work programme with the subregional organization on a number of selected joint projects to be carried out before the end of 2005. This followed the high-level meeting between ECOWAS and UNOWA in Abuja on 31 May 2004, during which the priority areas for collaboration were discussed and defined in a memorandum of understanding between the two institutions which is expected to be signed in the near future. A joint working group was also created.

28. In his presentation to the Security Council mission to West Africa in Accra on 22 June 2004, the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS stressed at length the importance of the reinforced partnership between ECOWAS and UNOWA, itemizing each of the priority areas for joint projects: good governance, electoral assistance, security sector reform, youth unemployment, free movement, and humanitarian assistance in West Africa, as well as the translation into concrete projects of those

cross-border recommendations of the Secretary-General and the Security Council that require action by ECOWAS. In its report, the Security Council mission to West Africa of June 2004 stated that it was gratified to learn, both from the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS and from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa, about the enlarged programme of collaboration between ECOWAS and UNOWA.

29. At its first meeting, held in Dakar on 21 and 22 July 2004, the ECOWAS-UNOWA Working Group developed a detailed work programme of cooperation for 2004-2005. Priority projects for 2004 include peaceful succession to power; lessons learned from ECOWAS peacekeeping operations since 1989; security sector reform; and a regional strategy for addressing youth unemployment. The Working Group also agreed on joint projects on electoral assistance, regional integration and illegal checkpoints; integrated border strategies; cooperation with civil society; and several activities within the framework of the new ECOWAS-PCASED small arms programme. All the United Nations agencies that have regional offices in West Africa as well as other partners will be closely involved in the implementation of that programme.

C. Good offices and special assignments

1. Establishing the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission

30. Although the present review does not cover the activities of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission, it should be noted that the establishment of the Mixed Commission, which is chaired by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, took up the larger portion of his time during the early months of UNOWA operations, as he was actively engaged in organizing and participating in the first three meetings of the Commission in Yaoundé and Abuja. This required the close involvement of his Senior Political Affairs Officer in substantial preparation and follow-up. The Senior Military Adviser, made available initially by the Government of Canada and subsequently by the Government of Sweden, worked almost exclusively on this issue. Although the chairmanship of the Commission still claims a large part of the Special Representative's time, UNOWA staff are less involved in the work of the Commission.

2. Crisis in Côte d'Ivoire

31. Prior to the appointment by the Secretary-General of his Special Representative for Côte d'Ivoire in February 2003, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa, consistent with the mandate of UNOWA, served as the main focal point for high-level negotiations relating to that country, which was facing one of the most pressing crises afflicting the subregion. He undertook several visits to Côte d'Ivoire to help Ivorian leaders defuse the tensions emerging from the events of September 2002 which triggered the Ivorian crisis. Similar visits were carried out in Togo and France. The Special Representative also participated in the peace negotiations among the Ivorian parties at Linas-Marcoussis, France, which resulted in the signing of an agreement.

3. Liberian crisis

32. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General was also closely involved in efforts to resolve the Liberian crisis until the appointment of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Liberia in July 2003. From May to August 2003, he provided support to the ECOWAS facilitator during the Accra peace negotiations, which resulted in the signing by the Liberian parties of a Comprehensive Peace Agreement on 18 August 2003.

4. Other working visits

33. During the initial period of UNOWA operations and as part of his conflict prevention efforts, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General closely monitored developments in other countries in the subregion, and visited Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, the Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

D. Reporting on key developments of subregional significance

1. Cross-border problems in West Africa

34. On 25 July 2003, the Security Council issued a presidential statement (S/PRST/2003/11), in which it requested the Secretary-General to submit recommendations on ways to combat subregional and cross-border problems in West Africa, in particular the proliferation of small arms and the use of child soldiers and mercenaries. In preparing that report, UNOWA held extensive consultations with several United Nations entities and other key partners in the subregion and at Headquarters, including United Nations peace operations and the ECOWAS Secretariat, as well as civil society organizations.

35. Under the presidency of France, the Security Council on 25 March 2004 held an open debate on the report (S/2004/200) which was attended by the Secretary-General, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ghana representing the current chairman of ECOWAS and several other ECOWAS Ministers, as well as the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS. The report was generally well received by the participants.

36. Following the open debate, the Security Council issued a presidential statement (S/PRST/2004/7), in which it stressed the importance of the role of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa in facilitating the coordination of a coherent United Nations approach to cross-border and transnational problems in the subregion, and encouraged the Special Representative to continue to hold regular meetings on coordination among the United Nations missions in the region in the interest of improved cohesion and maximum efficiency.

37. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General convened a high-level meeting in Dakar on 30 April 2004, in which all the United Nations regional offices participated, together with representatives of the United Nations peace missions, key development partners, including the European Union, the World Bank and IMF, the Deputy Executive Secretary of ECOWAS, as well as prominent civil society organizations such as the Mano River Women's Peace Network, OXFAM etc.

38. A matrix specifying lead actors and actions to be taken in furtherance of each of the 33 recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report was prepared prior to the high-level meeting. The matrix was amended during the meeting and will be regularly updated. In its report, the Security Council mission to West Africa of June 2004 stated that the mission looked forward to a progress report on those recommendations to be submitted towards the end of 2004 (S/2004/525, para. 51). UNOWA has already made the necessary arrangements, in cooperation with United Nations partners, to prepare the progress report.

2. Regional consequences of the Ivorian crisis

39. In his report to the Security Council on Côte d'Ivoire of March 2003, the Secretary-General said he had asked the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa to examine, in consultation with other components of the United Nations system, the various aspects of the impact of the Côte d'Ivoire crisis on the subregion and explore ways of addressing them. Following the recruitment of two international consultants, subsequent work by UNOWA staff, and a broad-based process of consultation, the final report was submitted to Headquarters in April 2004, and then made available to the members of the Security Council mission that visited the subregion in June 2004. This is an ongoing project, however, since the regional consequences of the Ivorian crisis are continuing to develop. UNOWA therefore intends to keep the situation under close review and to prepare periodic updates, as appropriate. One component of the follow-up was the joint political and humanitarian assessment sent by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa in June 2004 to the border areas of Burkina Faso and Mali adjoining Côte d'Ivoire.

3. Youth unemployment

40. Bearing in mind that the issue of youth unemployment has been raised consistently by various partners as a crucial issue for stability in the subregion, the Security Council mission of 2003 expressed the hope that UNOWA would undertake a major collaborative effort with the United Nations system and its partners in West Africa to devise a practical and concerted regional approach to this pressing problem (S/2003/688, para. 76).

41. In February 2004, UNOWA organized, in coordination with and thanks to the generous financial support of the Conflict Prevention and Peace Forum, a two-day seminar with civil society experts on youth unemployment from West Africa, as well with ILO and representatives from the private sector. Further civil society meetings were subsequently held. At the initiative of UNOWA, a task force was established, which comprises UNOWA, ILO, UNICEF, UNDP, UNIDO, UNFPA, UNIFEM and the World Bank. Work has started on the preparation of a study on youth unemployment and peace, with the assistance of ILO and a consultant, and in collaboration with ECOWAS. The study is expected to be submitted to the Security Council by the end of 2004.

4. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration

42. In their reports, the missions of the Security Council to the region in 2003 and 2004 called for the development of a regional disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. The 2004 mission also recommended that UNOWA

continue to work with United Nations missions in the region to harmonize the various disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes and eliminate inconsistencies. An initial meeting to harmonize the programmes was held in May 2004 with UNAMSIL, ONUCI, UNMIL, UNOGBIS and other United Nations partners, chaired by the Director of UNOWA. A second meeting was held in the first week of August, this time also involving the respective national commissions established in a number of countries for the purpose of disarmament. The meeting produced a set of policy recommendations and practical guidelines on regional and cross-border disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in West Africa. During the second half of 2004 and early 2005, a regional approach will be elaborated that will include not only those countries where disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes are already in operation, but also those countries — including Burkina Faso, Guinea and Mali — which have been adversely affected by crises in neighbouring countries.

5. Peaceful alternation of power

43. At the ECOWAS summit of December 2003, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa read out a message on behalf of the Secretary-General, in which the latter encouraged ECOWAS to formulate preventive measures to deal with conflicts created by Governments which, although duly elected, violate constitutional norms and flout basic principles of good governance, thus adding to instability in the subregion. In that statement, the Secretary-General also said: "The international community, and particularly the countries in the subregion, are right to condemn coups d'état which bring immense suffering to so many countries in Africa. At the same time, we should not be silent when faced with poor standards of governance, which are sometimes the principal cause of those coups d'état." This subject, which had additional resonance following the unconstitutional removal from power of President Kumba Yala of Guinea-Bissau, is increasingly being recognized by the international community, as well as regional actors, as requiring urgent attention.

44. In agreement with the President of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo, and the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa decided to initiate a project on the peaceful alternation of power. This will entail the preparation, in close consultation with UNDP and other partners in the region, of an in-depth study and a conference aimed at formulating preventive measures for dealing with internal conflicts in West Africa resulting from bad governance. A sensitization campaign will be carried out to encourage ECOWAS member States to adopt the measures. The project will also focus on examining the legal frameworks governing the activities of political parties in each of the ECOWAS member States and developing proposals for harmonizing those norms. Work in this area has begun, and it is expected that the study — the first phase of the project — should be completed by the end of 2004.

6. Field missions

45. In their efforts to enhance linkages between the various fields of activity of the United Nations system, UNOWA staff members have undertaken field missions to sensitive areas not included in the mandates of the various United Nations peace operations. To this effect, two important joint political and humanitarian missions led by UNOWA were dispatched in the first half of 2004.

46. The first mission was carried out in Guinea Forestière, a province of Guinea bordered by Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire. The main findings were conveyed to the meeting of the five Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and one Representative of the Secretary-General in West Africa in February 2004, especially the extremely precarious situation in Guinea Forestière, which is home to most of the serious cross-border problems afflicting the subregion. The mission described Guinea Forestière as the gaping hole in efforts by the international community to promote an integrated regional strategy for West Africa. The Special Representatives asked UNOWA, working with various United Nations partners, to prepare a strategy for Guinea Forestière and neighbouring countries that would involve the United Nations peace missions and the United Nations country team in Guinea. As a result of this initiative, the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Guinea was requested to convene a meeting with his colleagues from the three countries bordering Guinea Forestière and UNOWA.

47. A second field mission was carried out in June 2004 in the areas of Burkina Faso and Mali bordering Côte d'Ivoire. This mission was arranged just before the second Security Council mission to West Africa to enable UNOWA and other United Nations entities in the region to provide the latter mission with relevant information on those two countries which, although not in crisis or post-crisis situations and not on the Council mission's itinerary, have nevertheless been profoundly affected by developments in neighbouring countries. A detailed report was prepared on the field visit and shared with United Nations partners, civil society organizations, and principal interested Governments. Significant follow-up on that report is planned for late 2004 and early 2005. As recommended in the report, a meeting will be held at Sikasso, in southern Mali, to be organized jointly by ECOWAS and UNOWA, and to which the border security services of Burkina Faso, Guinea and Mali would be invited, to discuss security sector best practices and inter-State collaboration. Other recommendations have been submitted to the respective United Nations country teams and will be communicated to external partners and the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General at their next meeting.

48. The senior political and humanitarian advisers of UNOWA will undertake similar missions to other sensitive border areas during the last quarter of 2004. These activities will seek to address some of the concerns expressed by the Security Council mission, of June 2004 whose members were briefed on the above-mentioned missions. Those concerns were:

(a) The need to pay sustained attention not only to those countries hosting United Nations peace missions but also to those countries that are currently stable and show commitment to good governance, protection of human rights and good-neighbourly relations,

(b) The need to follow up on the Security Council's recommendation that UNOWA, in cooperation with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the relevant country teams and Governments, and other United Nations and international partners, work on integrated strategies in dealing with the broad range of problems afflicting certain border areas in order to try to prevent conflict from spreading further (S/2004/525, para. 58). UNOWA will focus significantly on this area of activity in the coming months.

E. Perception by key international partners of the work of UNOWA

49. A questionnaire on the work of UNOWA, which was sent to 15 United Nations agencies or offices, organizations related to the United Nations and civil society organizations with regional coverage, drew the following responses:

(a) On the mandate of UNOWA, partners made a variety of comments as to how it could be strengthened in order to permit the United Nations system to adopt a more consistently regional approach to the problems of West Africa;

(b) Regarding the UNOWA effort to consult its various partners, almost all respondents said it was satisfactory or very satisfactory. As to whether UNOWA was a useful interlocutor for regional organizations such as ECOWAS, the majority agreed or strongly agreed that this was so;

(c) On whether UNOWA provided added value for raising awareness on issues of concern for the institution in question, the majority agreed. Asked if UNOWA was carrying out its mandate of underlining the regional dimension of various problems afflicting West Africa, all agreed or strongly agreed;

(d) Asked whether their organizations envisaged in the near future making greater use of UNOWA as a forum to bring up subregional priority issues of concern to them, the majority replied that they definitely would do so.

IV. Observations

50. Despite the initial administrative and logistical constraints, as well as unforeseen developments in the subregion that demanded the urgent attention of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the United Nations Office for West Africa has made considerable and appreciable progress. In doing so, it has endeavoured to perform its broad mandate with a view to avoiding duplication while bringing together as many players as possible to pursue a regional integrated approach to the many challenges facing West African countries.

51. The UNOWA mandate is articulated around a three-pronged geographical, functional and methodological axis. Geographically, the Office has to deal with issues affecting 16 countries from a regional perspective. Functionally, these issues are wide ranging in their complexity and require greater synergy between the political, peace, development and humanitarian arms of the United Nations. Methodologically, the Office has to perform tasks requiring time-consuming consultations with a wide range of partners, as well as in-depth expertise, including undertaking diplomatic activities; carrying out academic/think tank studies on these complex issues; and undertaking field visits to promote an integrated strategy in support of the work of ECOWAS.

52. The main achievements of UNOWA during the period under review include:

(a) The establishment of useful mechanisms and plans of cooperation between UNOWA and its key international partners, including United Nations agencies, United Nations peace operations and political presences (Special Representatives of the Secretary-General), ECOWAS and the European Union;

(b) The significant contributions of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and senior UNOWA staff to conflict prevention, peacemaking and

peace-building activities in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and other countries in West Africa;

(c) The preparation of comprehensive reports and in-depth studies on cross-border, cross-cutting and subregional issues and the ongoing follow-up actions on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on cross-border problems and in the presidential statement of the Security Council;

(d) The regular interaction between UNOWA and prominent civil society organizations active in peace-building, conflict prevention and development activities in the subregion;

(e) The carrying out of field missions aimed at assessing developments in potential tension-prone areas requiring special attention with regard to cross-border implications.

53. It is worth reporting that UNOWA is gradually being viewed by key international partners and by civil society organizations as a useful tool for raising public awareness about cross-border and subregional problems and for bringing a regional perspective to a number of issues that hitherto had been looked at from an exclusively national perspective. The establishment and activities of UNOWA have spurred many other institutions and bilateral organizations to focus on addressing the challenges confronting West Africa using a regional perspective and to work — often in consultation with UNOWA — on devising their own regional strategies for West Africa.

54. Over the past 12 months, the activities of UNOWA have increased drastically, thus putting its limited staff and other resources under tremendous pressure. This increasingly heavier workload, which results mainly from additional tasks being assigned by the Secretary-General and the Security Council, revealed the pressing need for additional resources to be provided to the Office. It is to be recalled that such a need has been recognized by the Security Council in several reports, including:

(a) The report of the Security Council mission to West Africa of June/July 2003, in which the view was expressed that UNOWA should be strengthened by resources from within the United Nations or from Member States in order to carry out some of the additional tasks suggested in the report (S/2003/688, para. 66);

(b) The report of the Security Council mission to West Africa of June 2004, in which the mission recalled its recommendation of the previous year and reiterated that UNOWA could fulfil its mandate more effectively with additional resources. With the Office's wide-ranging activities and the importance of a coherent regional approach to the conflicts and other problems afflicting West Africa, the mission recommended that additional resources be provided rapidly for the Office (S/2004/525, para. 53).